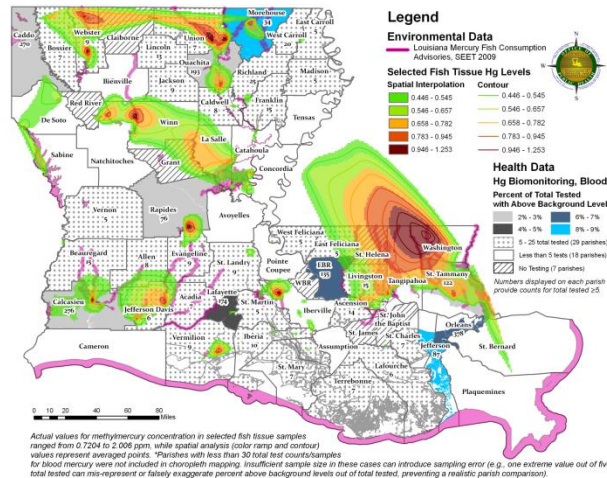


DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING (EPHT) SYSTEM TO IDENTIFY COMMUNITIES OF POTENTIAL CONCERN



What is the problem?

The Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) issues fish consumption advisories in consultation with state regulatory agencies. When resources allow, LDHH offers blood mercury testing to communities of potential concern. Due to limited funds, LDHH must target monitoring and surveillance activities to waterbodies and communities where contaminants and exposures are expected to be high. LDHH has no way of identifying waterbodies of concern beyond areas involved in major releases; and no way of identifying communities of concern. A surveillance system that could link fish-tissue mercury levels and blood mercury levels was needed.

What Did Tracking Do?

LEPHT developed a system using methods developed by CDC's EPHT Program. It involved identifying methods for visually representing fish-tissue mercury levels and high blood mercury levels statewide. This EPHT surveillance system presents and links fish tissue mercury and blood mercury levels. Simple mapping and overlay of data can assist in targeting geographic areas of potential concern, where biomonitoring or outreach may be necessary.

Improved Public Health

Based on these results, recommendations for outcome-based public health action plans are being developed. This system enables researchers to maximize resource utilization while identifying and prioritizing areas where intervention may be helpful in reducing mercury exposure through fish consumption. Future plans involve supplementation of this surveillance system with other data sources to enable more comprehensive and thorough mercury tracking. In the long-term, use of this tool may ultimately reduce mercury exposures, and subsequently, adverse mercury-related health effects.